Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Wilson, Larry David. 1988. *Amastridium, A. veliferum.*

Amastridium Cope

Amastridium Cope, 1861 (1860): 370. Type-species, *Amastridium veliferum* Cope, 1861, by monotypy.

Fleischmannia Boettger, 1898: 69. Type-species, *Fleischmannia obscura* Boettger, 1898, by monotypy.

Mimometopon Werner, 1903: 349. Type-species, *Mimometopon sapperi* Werner, 1903, by monotypy.

Phrydops Boulenger, 1905: 453. Type-species, *Phrydops melas* Boulenger, 1905, by monotypy.

• **Content**. A single species, *Amastridium veliferum*, is recognized.

• **Definition and Diagnosis**. A colubrid genus characterized by: moderately slender body with head noticeably distinct from body; head scutellation consisting of a normal rostral followed by two internasals, two prefrontals, two supraoculars, one frontal, and two parietals; lateral head scutellation of a divided nasal, loreal present or not, one preocular, two postoculars, no suboculars, temporals 1+2; seven supralabials, with the 3rd and 4th entering orbit; infralabials 9, with four touching anterior chin shields and fifth the largest; dorsal scales smooth, in 17 rows throughout (males with supra-anal tubercles); ventrals 111-170; anal plate divided; subcaudals 68-86, paired; maximum known total length 724 mm; maxillary teeth 11-17, subequal in size, followed by two enlaged rear teeth, grooved or not; hemipenis simple and slightly clavate, with a sulcus spermaticus bifurcating at point of junction of spinose area and calyculate area, each arm extending for only a short distance into calyculate area, basal two-thirds of organ spinose, distal one-third calyculate, two enlaged spines at base; dorsal color dark gray with row of very small white spots every four to five scales on fifth row; venter grayish brown, paler anteriorly; dorsum of head dark gray to level of supraoculars and frontal with pattern of wavy black lines; rust-colored posteromedially-indented blotch present on parietals, most of temporals and nuchal region with black-outlined dark gray large median blotch on each parietal.

Amastridium may be distinguished from other colubrid genera in the Western Hemisphere by the following combination of characteristics: head scales normal, including 1+2 temporals; dorsal scales smooth in females, smooth but for supra-anal tubercles in males, in 17 rows throughout; anal plate divided.

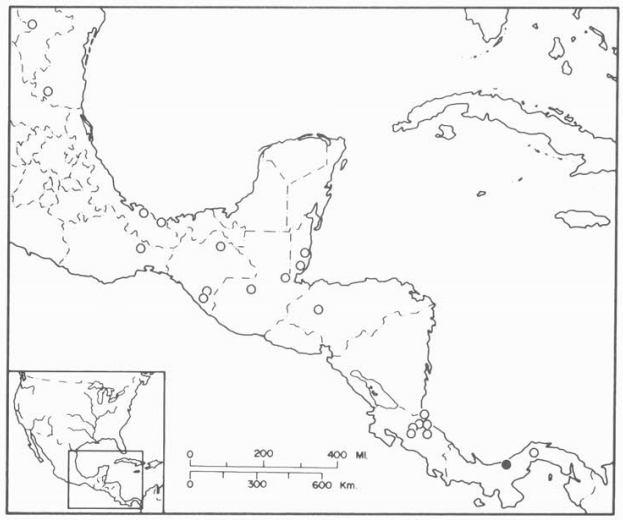
• **Descriptions, Illustrations, Distribution, Fossil Record, and Pertinent Literature**. See species account.

• **Etymology**. The name *Amastridium* appears to be formed of the Greek *mastr-* ("searcher"), and the Greek diminutive suffix *-idium*. The first letter of the name was most likely intended by Cope to represent a euphonic alpha, affecting the pronunciation but not the meaning. Given such was the case, the meaning would be "a little searcher," in apparent reference to the snake's size and foraging habits. It is possible, however, that Cope used the *a-* as an intensive alpha, meaning "very much," thus signifying "very much the little searcher." The gender is neuter.

Amastridium veliferum Cope

Amastridium veliferum Cope, 1861 (1860): 370. Type-locality, "Cocuyas de Veraguas, New Granada" (= Cocuyas, Provinca de Veraguas, Panamá). Holotype, Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia 3738, adult male, collected by R. W. Mitchell (examined by author).

Fleischmannia obscura Boettger, 1898: 69. Type-locality, "San Jose, Rep. Costa Rica." Holotype, Natur-Museum Senckenberg 8185a, sex unknown but probably male, collected by Carl Fleischmann in 1893 (not examined by author).



Map. Solid circle indicates the type-locality. Open circles mark other localities.

Mimometopon sapperi Werner, 1903: 349. Type-locality, "Guatemala." Holotype not designated.

Phrydops melas Boulenger, 1905: 454. Type-locality, "Carriblanco [= Cariblanco, Prov. Alajuela], Costa Rica." Holotype, BMNH 1905.1.30.53, female, collected by C. H. Lankester, date of collection unknown (examined by author).

Amastridium sapperi: Dunn, 1925: 1.

Phydrops melas: Dunn, 1931: 163.

Mimometophon sapperi: Dunn, 1931: 163.

Amastridium veliferum veliferum: Smith, 1971: 255.

Amastridium veliferum sapperi: Smith, 1971: 255.

• **Content**. Wilson and Meyer (1969) specifically argued against the recognition of infraspecific taxa in this species. Smith (1971), however, chose to recognize two subspecies, *veliferum* and *sapperi* (but see Remarks).

• **Definition and Diagnosis**. See generic account.

• **Descriptions**. Wilson and Meyer (1969) presented the most complete description of this taxon. Smith's (1971) paper should be consulted as well for additional details. Wilson and Meyer (1985) presented a summary description, incorporating data published past their 1969 paper.

• **Illustrations**. Wilson and Meyer (1969) provided pen-and-ink drawings of the dorsum of the head and the sulcate side of the hemipenis.

• **Distribution**. *Amastridium veliferum* inhabits low and moderate elevations (near sea level to ca. 1520 m) of the Caribbean versant from Nuevo León, México to northern Panamá and on the Pacific in Chiapas, México and Costa Rica.

• **Fossil Record**. None.

• **Pertinent Literature**. Most of the literature on this taxon deals with systematics. Wilson and Meyer (1969) discussed taxonomy and distribution, as did Smith (1971) and Wilson and Meyer (1985). Comments on relationships are in Cope (1886, 1893, 1894, 1895), Dunn (1928), Wilson and Meyer (1969), Myers (1974), Rossman and Schaefer (1974), and Cadle (1984). New distributional records beyond those cited in Wilson and Meyer (1969) are reported in McCoy (1970), Smith (1971), Wilson and Robinson (1971), Hoevers and Henderson (1974), Blaney and Blaney (1978), and Lee

(1980). The taxon has appeared in a series of lists, including those of Cope (1887), Dunn (1928), Amaral (1930), Smith and Taylor (1945), Stuart (1963), Myers and Rand (1969), Peters and Orejas-Miranda (1970), Henderson and Hoevers (1975), Scott et al. (1983), Villa (1983), Wilson (1983) and Villa et al. (1988). Comments on ecological parameters are in Stuart (1948), Dunn (1949), Taylor (1954), Martin (1955), Greene (1970), and Blaney and Blaney (1978).

• **Remarks**. The taxonomy of the genus *Amastridium* remains unstable, principally because of differences of opinion between Wilson and Meyer (1969, 1985), on the one hand, and Smith (1971) and Smith and Smith (1976), on the other, over the interpretation of the data regarding variation in certain characters. Wilson and Meyer (1969) based their opinion that the two previously-recognized species, *veliferum* and *sapperi*, are conspecific on their interpretation of variation in numbers of ventrals and subcaudals, color, presence or absence of a loreal, and numbers of maxillary teeth as clinal and/or discordant. Smith (1971) accepted the conspecificity of *veliferum* and *sapperi* but preferred to recognize them as subspecies. His view was criticized by Wilson and Meyer (1985) as involving the imposition of "a nomenclatural arrangement based on patterns of variation in two characters (numbers of ventrals and presence or absence of a loreal) to the exclusion of the consideration of variation in other characters (e.g., color, numbers of subcaudals, and numbers of maxillary teeth)." Wilson and Meyer (1985) also discussed the material which had accrued since the 1969 revision, and indicated that the data on these specimens "reinforce the picture of character variation presented by Wilson and Meyer (1969)." They further noted the need for more material from the critical Honduras-Nicaragua portion of the range "to determine the nature of the cline between the northern and southern segments of the range." Understandably, I choose to follow the disposition used by Wilson and Meyer (1969, 1985).

• **Etymology**. The name *veliferum* is derived from the Latin *velifer*, meaning "carrying sail" or "bearing a veil," the latter usage in apparent reference to the mantilla-like color pattern of the head of this snake.

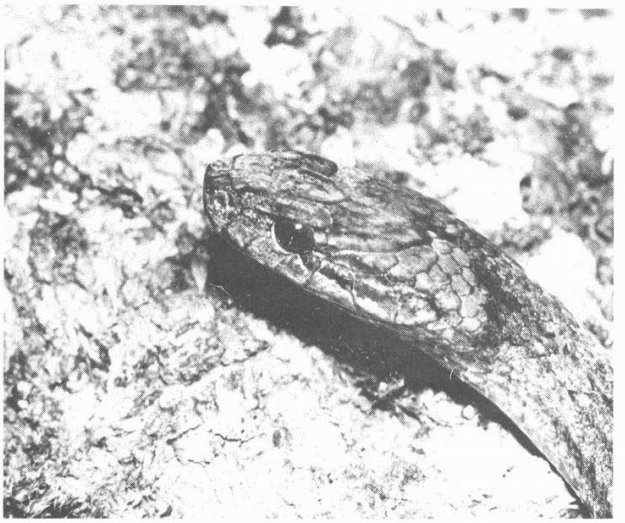


Figure 2. *Amastridium veliferum*, detail of head. Photograph by Stephen G. Tilley.

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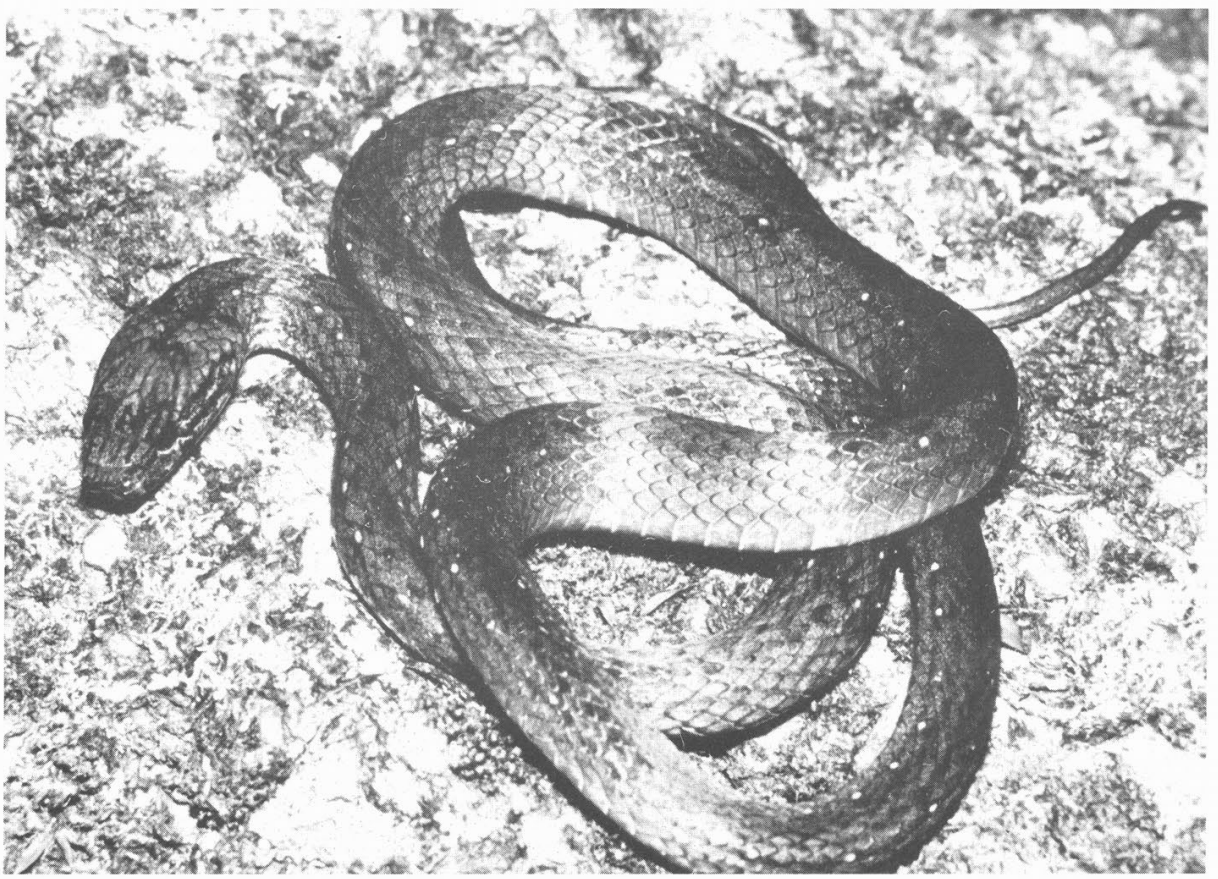

Figure 1. Dorsolateral view of *Amastridium veliferum* from Blue Creek, Belize. Photograph by Stephen G. Tilley.

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